Discriminate and go to jail

As if Coloradans needed any more reminders these days about the potential for militancy in the gay-rights movement, they need only look at the scenic town of Telluride on the Western Slope.

There, in a fit of political correctness disguised as good government, citizens and political leaders adopted a law last week that not only recognizes homosexuals as a protected minority — but would jail people for discrimination.

This bold departure from justice includes among its penalties up to 90 days in jail for, say, a business owner deemed to have denied employment to a gay or lesbian, among other protected classes. Offenders also can face a $300 fine.

The measure admittedly was intended at least in part as a protest against Amendment 2, which would repeal and forbid any Colorado laws that permit homosexuals to allege discrimination in housing, employment, etc., simply on the basis of their sex lives. The amendment, adopted by voters statewide last November, is currently on hold under a court injunction pending a test of its constitutionality.

But Telluride couldn't wait, so it pressed ahead with this assault on the freedom to hire, house and associate with those who don't engage in a lifestyle that many Americans find offensive. Only, this law also packs an extra punch, going further than other typical gay-rights laws.

What distinguishes this measure from the gay-rights law in Denver, for example, is that law essentially allows for civil remedies only, not criminal ones. So, a homosexual male who believes his boss fired him over his sexual preference can sue that employer on that basis in a Denver court.

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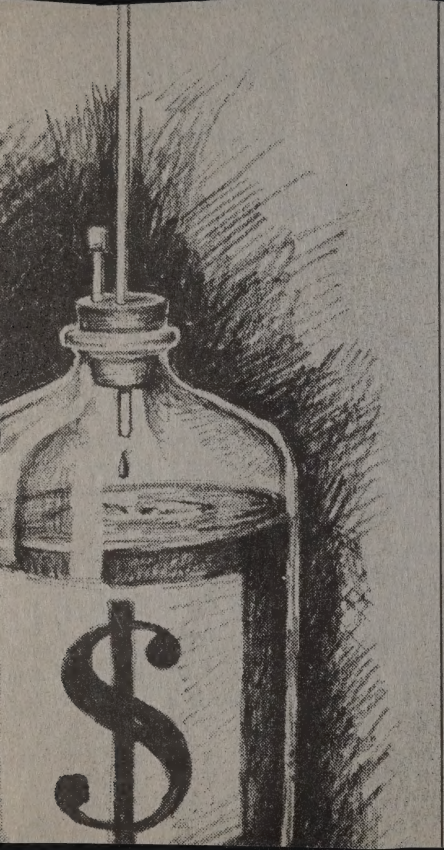
But — come on — jail time?

Amid all of the histrionics dominating the Amendment 2 debate these days, you'd think supporters of gay-rights measures — which most Colorado voters effectively opposed Nov. 3 — would pursue their agenda with a lighter touch.



office areas of the White House; the ban may be expanded to other areas. That could pose a problem for visiting heads of state who crave a smoke in a session with the president. Though curbs on smokers across the United States are becoming common, smoking is still widely accepted in Japan, Greece, France and elsewhere. Representatives at foreign embassies were characteristically diplomatic when told of the White House action. Said Anna Machairidis, press officer at the Greek Embassy in Washington: "Everybody is eager to sacrifice his personal comfort to do something for the rest of the society."

Senate leader tangles with time

Alice would feel right at home in that Wonderland named the U.S. Senate, where Democratic leader George Mitchell of Maine decreed Wednesday that henceforth 15-minute roll calls will last no more than 20 minutes. The issue is a perennial headache for Senate leaders. Senators, realizing that roll calls will be extended for them as they wander in from other appointments,